THE QUESTION BOX

A Query from Scotland

Questions come to us from far and near. Here is one from Scotland which has us "stumped": a correspondent writes — *In the year 1840 (70) members of the Fleming family (all named Fleming), ancestors of a Daniel Fleming of Glasgow, Scotland, emigrated from Glasgow to the United States where they all immediately settled in one town in Vermont. . . The Fleming family now living in Scotland are curious to know where in Vermont these 70 members are settled and if any of the descendants are living.*

Miss Follette, our research librarian, has found Flemings in 31 towns between 1937 and 1879, but no trace of 70 Flemings coming in one group to one town. Is there a Fleming around in Vermont or elsewhere within the range of *News and Notes* who can help us out?

OUR STORY OF THE MONTH

Another One about President Coolidge

Some one told Will Rogers he couldn't make President Coolidge smile. Will accepted the challenge. When introduced to the President, he said seriously: "I'm sorry, I didn't get the name." Coolidge broke into a broad smile, and Will won the bet.

RECORD MONTH FOR GIFTS?

We acknowledge, with sincere thanks, the many gifts to library and museum during the last month. They exemplify the increasing support of the work of the Society — they represent the extension and perpetuation of your idea of what is worthwhile in living. There is not space to allow a listing of the gifts, but we can give you the donors' names:

C. A. Barden, *Wallingford;* Mrs. Helen Gover Burpee, *Palo Alto, Calif.;* Mrs. James L. H. Carr, *St. Albans;* Judge and Mrs. Clarence P. Cowles, *Burlington;* George N. Dale, *Chicago, Ill.;* Mrs. Leonard Doten, *Palo Alto, Calif.;* Mrs. W. B. Fellows, *Tilton, N. H.;* Hon. Leon S. Gay, *Cavendish;* Mrs. H. E. Heyer, *Canton, N. Y.;* Samuel Howell, *Randolph;* H. P. Jackson, *Newark, N. J.;* Mrs. H. Nelson Jackson, *Burlington;* Mrs. George B. Kolk, *Burlington;* Howard G. Marsden, *Manchester;* Mrs. Claude N. Martin, *Littleton, N. H.;* Hon. Charles A. Plumley, *Washington, D. C.;* Miss Clara E. Ranney, *Sartons River;* Mrs. E. A. Rixford, *East Highgate;* Harold K. Sage, *Normal, Illinois;* Robert Thayer, *Montpelier;* Dr. Frederick Waite, *Dover, N. H.;* Mrs. Harry M. Woodcock, *Vergennes.*

VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY, MONTPELIER, VERMONT.
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VHS *News and Notes*
VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Montpelier, Vermont

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THE VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY, MONTPELIER, VERMONT

News & Notes

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR ALL MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY

Volume 2 October 1950 Number 2

Was This "Master Humphrey's Clock?"

HISTORIC CLOCK TO CHIME AGAIN

Governor Clement's Gift Under Repair

One of the main attractions of the Society's museum continues to be what has come to be called the "Old English Hall Clock." Through the generosity of two members of our Society, the clock which was damaged by blasting operations a few years ago is now under repair. Soon again we hope to hear the deep mellow tones of the bell which strikes the hours and the silvery chimes which start off Sunday morning by playing *Old Hundred* and continue with a different tune each day—*Johnny's So Long at the Fair* on Monday, *Auld Lang Syne* on Tuesday, *Home Sweet Home* on Wednesday, Annie Laurie on Thursday, *Jennie Jones* on Friday—and finish on Saturday with *The Minstrel Boy* in time to begin all over again Sunday morning.

The historic clock was placed in the reception room of the State House in 1920 by former Governor Percival W. Clement (1919-1920) and chimed the hours through its corridors for nearly a quarter of a century, until it was presented to the Society by the estate of Governor Clement. It was brought to America from an old inn in Chester, England, by Mr. Clement, who bought it from Sherrott and Company in 1916, his original intention being that it adorn the Hotel Woodstock in New York city, of which he was then owner. With a change in plans because of war conditions, the clock came into the custody of the state, and, in 1944, of the Society.

A mystery envelopes the 14-foot clock. It is reported that some time before the Vermont flood of 1927, some one discovered an edition of Dickens at the local (Montpelier) library which contained under "Master Humphrey's Clock" a drawing which was almost identical to the Clement clock. We are trying but cannot

prove that story (it may be true for many volumes were lost in the flood). It was earlier assumed that the clock was completed in 1724, made during and immediately following the reign of Queen Anne. Mr. Clement's correspondence files show that he did painstaking research, trying to establish the significance of the figures, and to determine who made it, why, and for whom.

It is known that the clock was not made in 1724 (date on base of clock), but rather in the late 19th or early 20th century. It took twenty years to make it. There is an obvious emphasis on the Queen Anne period, and a certain portrait of her as the central figure on the door together with a probable bust of the Duke of Marlborough below. The style of the works, and of many details, indicates that the clock was less than 100 years old in 1919. Nor are the tunes typical of the early 18th century. It is made of English oak and some parts which are not carved indicate that the wood was very old.

The name of the clockmaker on the face is not that of any known member of the London Clockmakers Guild, and there is a complete published list of them all. But the old timepiece does suggest a connection with the Dickens' stories. In them, Mr. Humphrey opens his clock and digs out manuscripts from the base. Several could be hidden in the base of this clock. Someday, we hope to obtain information from England to complete the story. We are told that P. W. Clement never got the data he wanted.

The terse motto of the clock, carved beneath the door, is as appropriate today as it was in the days of Queen Anne — *Time Rules All.*

JOHNE GRAYE DOCUMENT STILL EXISTS

In Custody of Highgate Town Clerk

Was Vermont discovered before Champlain? Time and again the story of Johne Graye is brought up for many of us to puzzle over. To refresh your memory, it goes like this . . .

A shipwrecked English sailor penetrated the wilderness of our country and reached the Champlain Valley, to become the first white man to set foot on what is now Vermont. A letter was found, carefully encased by a lead tube, in 1853 on the left bank of the Missisquoi. The message read:

Nov 29 AD 1564

This is the solemne day I must die. This is the 90th day since we left the ship. All have perished and on the banks of this river I die too. Farewell may future posterity know our end.

Johne Graye

To add to the story, we find that the Town Clerk of Highgate, C. M. Tatro, *has* the document, which we had been told was lost in a fire, in his vault at Highgate Center. Whether or not it is genuine, we shall probably never know, although we plan to extend our research into the problem.

COLONIAL DAMES LEND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

$200 Appropriated to VHS

To help defray the heavy cost of moving the museum and library, which incidentally was not included in this year's budget (since we did not know we were to obtain the additional space) and therefore had so many of us baffled as to where we would raise the money, the Vermont Society of Colonial Dames has appropriated the sum of $200. Specifically, the check will be used toward the expense of building the wall shelves in the new Reading Room of the two Societies.

COPIES OF AUGUST NEWS AND NOTES WANTED

Central Supply Exhausted

The demand for the August *News and Notes,* which carried the story of Vermont's Liberty Bell, was so great that, although we thought we had a sufficient number printed, we now find that we cannot meet the needs of certain libraries and a *special request* of the U. S. Treasury Department. Their letter states that it had come to their attention indirectly, and they would like at least one copy. We have nothing personal to gain since educational non-profit organizations are tax-free, but we shall certainly be grateful to any of you who send in your old copies. (S'pose it'll do any good, come next March????)

LIST OF DONORS INCREASES

Valuable Additions to Library and Museum

This last month brought many more valuable additions to your library and museum. As we grow in membership, our list of donors also increases. (This seems to be a good spot to mention that we need and want your suggestions for new members. Send in the names, and by the next mail they'll be delivered a handsome invitation signed by President Gay and your Director. Drop us a line today. *Thank you.*)

We wish to express our appreciation, for all members of the Society, to the following donors for their thoughtfulness and consideration in naming the VHS as depository:

F. M. Atkinson, *Newport;* Rev. W. W. Bunge, *Rochester, Minn.;* Mrs. Elizabeth Gladding, *Montpelier;* Mrs. W. Lovering-Holman, *Lexington, Mass.;* Charles P. Merrill, *San Gabriel, Calif.;* Mrs. Florence T. Morris, *Jackson Heights, N. Y.;* Andrew G. Nystrom, *Hartford, Conn.;* W. L. L. Peltz, *Albany, N. Y.;* Clara E. Ranney, *Saxtons River;* Edmund A. Royce, *St. Albans;* Miss Mildred Sawyer, *Wianno, Mass.;* Mrs. Ernest W. Smith, *Burlington;* Mrs. Electa Ball Spangler, *Peoria, Ill.;* Charles B. Stone, *Los Angeles, Calif.;* Mrs. Margaret Van Ingen, *Cooperstown, N. Y.;* Vermont Daughters of the American Revolution; Vermont Society of Colonial Dames; William A. Walter, *Devon, Conn.;* Frederick C. Warner, *No. Amherst, Mass.*

VHS WELCOMES VERMONT LIBRARIANS TO MEMBERSHIP

Special Exhibit Staged at State Convention

A new VHS membership classification was announced at the state convention of the Vermont Library Association held in Burlington at Oakledge Manor on October 16 and 17. The special membership ($1.25) includes four issues of the *Vermont Quarterly,* the Society's official magazine, the monthly newsletter, *News and Notes,* a discount on VHS publications, special mailings of listings of Vermont books of history and methods of handling, as well as the complete services of the Society, including the answering of questions involving historical matters, the assembling of research data, the preparation of club programs and various other forms of assistance.

An attractive exhibit demonstrating the activities of the Society and a display of its publications were arranged by your staff for the convention. We are pleased to welcome this group, and to be given an opportunity to work more closely with them.

LEADING VERMONT FIRMS JOIN VHS

Institutional Memberships Growing

Vermont business men are cooperating generously in assisting us in the establishment of our Institutional Membership. The firms listed below have come into the fold since our announcement in the September issue. And, by the way, all members are urged to read in the October *Quarterly,* soon to reach you, the impressive story of a Vermont business one hundred years old. The factors that made the business great and will make others are in the story.

New members: Vermont Transit Co., Inc., Burlington; Jones and Lamson Machine Co., Springfield; Blair-Vermont Plywood Co., North Troy; Champlain Valley Fruit Co., Inc., Burlington; Vermont Advertising Co., Inc., Burlington; Ascutney Forge, Ascutney; WCAX Broadcasting Corp., Burlington; J. Leo Johnson Corp., Montpelier; Cone Automatic Machine Co., Inc., Windsor; Randall Co., Inc., Rutland; Comolli and Co., Barre; National Life Insurance Co., Montpelier; Central Vermont Public Service Corp., Rutland; The Free Press Association, Burlington; Ortiz Motor Sales, Inc., Barre; Barrows Coal Co., Inc., Brattleboro. Remember, too, that we have information about these firms and all

other institutional members on file in the office; and if you are interested in their services or products, do not hesitate to write for information.

OUR STORY OF THE MONTH

Know a Vermont Grandfather Clock Story?

There are plenty of grandfather clocks in Vermont. We are looking for a story that will have a Vermont flavor and better this story that comes out of the West. It seems that the owner of such a clock boasted that he had the oldest one in existence. Why? The shadow of the pendulum swinging back and forth on its journey of the many years had worn a hole through the back!

GREEN MOUNTAIN LAND

Flaherty Film Now Available

The new all-Vermont film, based on the book *The Vermont Story* by Earle W. Newton, former director of this society and now at Old Sturbridge Village, in Massachusetts, is now being distributed by the Vermont Development Commission. The film, *Green Mountain Land*, was a joint project of the Vermont Development Commission, the Vermont Historical Society and the Vermont Historic Sites Commission. Produced by Robert Flaherty, "father of the documentary film" and directed by his brother, David, it is a story of Vermont from its beginnings to the present day. It is available for distribution at the VDC.

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THE KENT TAVERN

Fine Old Landmark Restored

The fine historic old tavern at Kents Corners, in Calais, was presented to the Society in 1944 by the late A. Atwater Kent, philanthropist and pioneer radio builder, who ran a tiny shop into the world's largest radio business. Located about 10 miles north of Montpelier on the old County road, the building stands intact, very nearly as the builders left it 113 years ago. Nearby is the old West Church, believed to be the only remaining church with its original square box pews of unpainted pine.

The Kent Tavern was erected in 1837 by Abdiel Kent (1805-1887), not far from the site of his birthplace. The building is of brick, with timbers cut from the farm, and has four chimneys, several fireplaces, a spacious ballroom and a bar room. A large wooden addition was used as a general store and for the various enterprises of Abdiel. With the increase in his family, Mr. Kent gave up tending tavern and it became the birthplace of his seven children.

To Abdiel Kent belongs the distinction of having been, over a long period of years, the most active business man in town. In 1830, he commenced the manufacture of boots at Kents Corners. The boot business was carried on for 40 years, with his brother Ira, employing as many as 12 men and running a four-horse team to Canada to dispose of their goods. Harness making was carried on along with the boot enterprise. Abdiel enlarged his shop, as time went on, stocked dry goods and groceries and operated the first store at Kents Corners. Some of his other ventures were a starch factory built in 1844, an iron working machinery shop in 1847, a real estate business, and he served his town in nearly all public capacities.